

# THE ERVIN Edition

NEWS FROM COUNCILMEMBER VALERIE ERVIN DISTRICT 5 VOLUME 2 WINTER 2008



## COUNCILMEMBER ERVIN PROFILED AS ONE OF THE COUNTY'S "WONDER WOMEN"

Councilmember Ervin was profiled by *Bethesda Magazine* as an elected official who is committed to helping working people. Councilmember Ervin was in the company of 10 other notable women in the magazine's November/December 2007 "People Issue." The "Wonder Women" article was aptly titled because one of the other women profiled includes actress and area resident

Lynda Carter, who is best known for her starring role in the television series "Wonder Woman."

According to the author, Ira Apfel, Councilmember Ervin "has dedicated her life to improving the lives of working families as a labor organizer, a county school board member and, now, as a councilmember."

"I am delighted to be in such good company," said Councilmember Ervin. "The common thread in every profile is how each woman has spent a great deal of time

devoted to making a difference for others. Being recognized for those efforts is not necessary, but it is an honor."

In the article, Councilmember Ervin said there are many ways to have an impact without being a public figure; however, the added responsibility of being a councilmember allows her to set an example for others who may consider running for office.

"We need to have a diverse group of women holding public office," said Councilmember Ervin. "We need to continue to show girls and young women that no matter where they start in life their possibilities and opportunities are limitless."

To read more about Councilmember Ervin or the 10 other women, visit [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/mem/Ervin/PDF/wonder\\_women\\_color.pdf](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/mem/Ervin/PDF/wonder_women_color.pdf).

## NATIONAL SURVEY ON GENDER AND MULTICULTURAL LEADERSHIP RELEASED

On November 7, Councilmember Ervin was a guest speaker, as the Gender and Multicultural Leadership (GMCL) Project presented its findings from a national survey of elected officials of color that details how race and gender affect 21st century politics. The event was held at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.

A team of political scientists completed the GMCL survey, which is a comprehensive multiracial national study of Black, Latino, Asian and American Indian elected officials. The survey examines their personal backgrounds, paths to public office, representational roles and policy stands on key issues, such as the Iraq war, "No Child

Left Behind," immigration and the Voting Rights Act.

Councilmember Ervin was delighted to participate in this event. "I was honored to speak at the unveiling of such an important survey because this data helps quantify how people of color continue to make inroads as elected officials," said Councilmember Ervin. "We are making progress all over the nation, as elected bodies more closely resemble the populations they represent; however, we still have a long way to go. This study helps illustrate the impact that people of color have made as elected officials."

For further information about GMCL, visit [www.gmcl.org/index.htm](http://www.gmcl.org/index.htm) or contact the organization at 607-255-4792.

Huguette Roe, Bethesda Magazine



Sam Kittner, Bethesda Magazine



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# MESSAGE FROM **COUNCILMEMBER ERVIN**



Dear Resident,

It is hard for me to believe that my first year as your councilmember has drawn to a close. My job has enabled me to help provide services for working families and children, expand pre-kindergarten services, implement a pilot project to close the achievement gap, work to help protect the county's watersheds, promote environmentally sensitive road design and propose a comprehensive pedestrian safety initiative. While my job is extremely rewarding, I know that I have just scratched the surface.

Throughout 2007, I have met some truly amazing people. I am proud to represent such a diverse, dynamic and vibrant district. Constituent service is one of my top priorities, and more than 1,000 residents contacted my office in 2007. Your input is critical and helps me make decisions on a variety of difficult issues. For those who have yet to contact me, please feel free to do so. You are truly my eyes and ears in the community.

I will continue to make myself available to meet with residents outside of Rockville, with regular meeting times available at the Town Hall in Kensington, the Park and Planning Commission in Silver Spring and the Regional Services Center in Wheaton. I know that your days are hectic, and I believe that you should be able to meet with your councilmember in your own neighborhood.

Your calls and emails have resulted in improvements and new initiatives in our community that you can read about in this newsletter. This is the second issue of the *Ervin Edition*. The first issue can be accessed electronically at <http://valerieervin.org/cc-ervin-edition-06-07.html>.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to enhance our community. I wish you and your family happiness, health and prosperity in 2008.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Valerie Ervin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Valerie Ervin

# PEDESTRIAN SAFETY INITIATIVE

## COMPREHENSIVE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY INITIATIVE

### Spearheaded by Councilmember Ervin & the County Executive

There must be a partnership between county government and its residents for pedestrian safety initiatives to be successful. That is why Councilmember Ervin and the County Executive have made creating safe, walkable communities a top priority in Montgomery County. On December 5, Councilmember Ervin and the County Executive were joined by Delegate William Frick (D-16), Police Chief J. Thomas Manger, Department of Public Works and Transportation Director Arthur Holmes, Jr., and Andrew Kleine, chairman of PREZCO, an umbrella group of 12 Silver Spring civic associations representing 7,000 households, to announce a new comprehensive pedestrian safety plan.

"As the Council's representative on the Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee, I am committed to do all that I can to promote pedestrian safety," said Councilmember Ervin. "The Pedestrian Safety Initiative will provide the critical infrastructure and funding necessary to improve pedestrian safety throughout the county, with a special focus on areas with high pedestrian collision rates."

This initiative will approach pedestrian safety issues comprehensively, by conducting an overall analysis of where the county is today and identifying the direction that the county needs for the future. The Pedestrian Safety Initiative focuses on the three essential components of pedestrian safety: education, engineering and enforcement.

"Living in and representing District 5, which has a high number of pedestrian related traffic incidents, I know that the county's initiatives on speed enforcement, outreach

and education, especially for children and non-English speaking residents, are critical to improving safety," said Councilmember Ervin.

Councilmember Ervin experienced some of these dangerous intersections first hand when she participated in several walking tours in Silver Spring. In addition to a variety of trouble spots in the central business districts, areas like the Linden Lane mixing bowl are also problematic.

In 2006, the number of traffic and pedestrian fatalities exceeded homicides in the county. According to county police, there were 18 fatal pedestrian collisions and 419 reported pedestrian-related collisions. This data illustrates why pedestrian safety is a vital part of the county's overall approach to transportation management.

The Pedestrian Safety Initiative will work towards creating an interconnected system of pedestrian access routes around school zones, central business districts and transit areas because these areas have a significant amount of pedestrian activity combined with high traffic volumes. This initiative will ensure that the county's most vulnerable roadway users receive as much attention as drivers.

"Improving pedestrian safety is one of PREZCO's top priorities," said Andrew Kleine. "This is a landmark plan that will make the entire county safer and more walkable."

Through this partnership with residents, the county will become a safer and more pedestrian friendly place to live. Please join Councilmember Ervin and the County Executive as they begin working to build safer communities.

The Pedestrian Safety Initiative can be viewed at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/walk](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/walk). For additional information, please contact Councilmember Ervin's office at 240-777-7960.



*Councilmember Ervin and the County Executive join together to push for comprehensive pedestrian safety improvements.*



*Councilmember Ervin takes a walking tour of pedestrian problem areas in Silver Spring.*



# NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

## KENSINGTON

### Train Horn Noise

Councilmember Ervin and her staff met with representatives from the Rock Creek Hills Citizens Association about excessive train horn noise. The Council's Transportation and Environment (T&E) Committee will take up this issue on January 24 at 9:30 a.m. in the Council Office Building. State and county officials will brief the T&E Committee on train whistles and provide information about the alternatives that may be used to resolve this issue. Special thanks to Joe Rosenberg for the many hours he has spent advocating for a quieter community.

### Community Signs

Councilmember Ervin met with representatives from several civic associations, including the Coalition of Kensington Communities, who requested that the Council take action to reduce the cost of applying for sign permits. Councilmembers Ervin, Floreen and Praisner have cosponsored Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 07-15 to allow permit fees to be waived or reduced for nonprofit organizations on the Planning Board's list of civic and homeowner organizations. The Council's Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee is scheduled to review this ZTA on January 24 at 2:00 p.m. The full text of this ZTA can be viewed at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/pdf/zta/2007/07-15.pdf](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/pdf/zta/2007/07-15.pdf).

## SILVER SPRING

### Silver Spring International Middle School Renovations



Councilmember Ervin advocated for funding to improve the Wayne Avenue facade at Silver Spring International Middle School, and the renovations are complete. She met with the Task Force to Improve Our Schools, School Board President Nancy Navarro and Superintendent Jerry Weast to make this project a reality. The improvements include fresh paint, new windows, screens for the utility equipment and new handrails.

Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail to create a first-class trail that is attractive, uninterrupted and connects to downtown Silver Spring. For information on how to get involved, visit [www.cctrail.org](http://www.cctrail.org).

### Speed Camera on Dale Drive

Councilmember Ervin received letters from Silver Spring residents concerning speeding and the corresponding lack of pedestrian safety along Dale Drive from Georgia Avenue to Piney Branch Road. Based on these concerns, she asked the police to consider installing a mobile speed camera. If approved, mobile-speed vans will begin enforcement this spring.

### Sligo Creek Golf Course

Councilmember Ervin met with representatives from the Forest Estates Civic Association, Forest Glen Estates Civic Association, North Hills of Sligo Creek Civic Association and Friends of Sligo Creek to listen to concerns about the proposed changes to Sligo Creek Golf Course. Subsequent to this meeting, she also met with Keith Miller, executive director of the Montgomery County Revenue Authority.

Councilmember Ervin is not satisfied that the current plan adequately addresses the concerns raised by the community, such as increased traffic, light and noise pollution and stormwater runoff. Councilmember Ervin will continue advocate to keep this parcel as part of the golf course system in a manner that does not impact the neighboring community.



### Capital Crescent Trail Improvements

The Department of Public Works and Transportation completed storm drain and trail improvements on the Capital Crescent Trail from east of the Rock Creek Trestle to beyond the Lytonville Bridge. These upgrades protect the trail from stormwater runoff and widen the trail. Councilmember Ervin will continue to work with the

*Councilmembers Floreen and Ervin take Champ for a walk on the trail accompanied by Peter Gray and Ben Stutz.*

## TAKOMA PARK

### Piney Branch Pool

Takoma Park representatives and residents have expressed concerns about the potential closing of the swimming pool at Piney Branch Elementary School. Since 2000, the pool has been managed by the YMCA; however, the organization decided not to renew its contract with the Department of Recreation. Councilmembers Ervin, Leventhal and Elrich have convened a working group to evaluate alternatives including keeping the pool open, converting the space into a gymnasium or closing the facility. These meetings have been taking place with representatives from various county departments, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and the City of Takoma Park. The working group hopes to have a final recommendation on this issue in March.

### National Night Out

Councilmember Ervin attended National Night Out at the Takoma/Langley Crossroads. This event brought residents together with public safety representatives from Montgomery County, Prince George's County and the City of Takoma Park. Residents enjoyed music and food, and children explored fire trucks and learned about police activities and fire safety.

### Takoma Park Metro Station Project

Councilmember Ervin was part of an extensive lobbying campaign with Takoma Park representatives and residents that resulted in some changes to the EYA project at the Takoma Park Metro Station. Some of these improvements include the addition of a pedestrian countdown signal at the bus entrance on Carroll Avenue, an all-pedestrian phase-in at the bus entrance on Carroll Avenue and use of the bus bay closest to the platform elevator for MetroAccess vehicles. Unfortunately, many issues still remain unresolved including the appropriateness of low- to mid-level density development with garages adjacent to transit, maintaining the same number of existing parking spaces, designing the site to accommodate future bus expansion and maintaining inviting green space. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) voted to approve this plan over ongoing objections from several state, county and city representatives. This project now goes to the Federal Transit Administration and the District's planned unit development process for review.



*Councilmember Ervin learns more about public safety issues facing the Takoma/Langley Crossroads.*

## WHEATON

### Connecticut Avenue Estates Works to Revitalize Neighborhood

Representatives from the Connecticut Avenue Estates Civic Association contacted Councilmember Ervin's office to discuss their concerns about pedestrian safety, public safety and code enforcement issues. Staff met with residents and took a walking tour through the neighborhood. As a result of this tour, staff mobilized representatives from the Maryland State Highway Administration and various county departments and agencies to address a variety of issues. This collaborative effort has led to improvements in Joseph's Branch Creek, improved lighting and increased signage to help reduce speeding. Thanks to all the residents of Connecticut Avenue Estates who continue to work to improve their neighborhood.

### Wheaton Small Business Alliance

In 2007, when county government acted to extend parking hours and increase parking fees in the parking lot districts, several hundred residents objected to these changes. Councilmember Ervin listened to these concerns and took action. She introduced a resolution to restore existing rates and hours and garnered support from the County Executive and her Council colleagues, who unanimously voted to restore the pre-existing parking rules.

Wheaton business owners, inspired by their success in organizing to help convince the county to rescind the parking changes, formed the Wheaton Small Business Alliance. This merchants association will advocate for small business owners who might not otherwise join the

# NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

## WHEATON

Wheaton & Kensington Chamber of Commerce because of financial constraints.



Councilmember Ervin joins with local small business owners, LEDC representatives and residents in Wheaton to kick-off the Wheaton Small Business Alliance

One of the association's first actions was to work with the Latino Economic Development Corp (LEDC), to establish a "Think Local First" campaign for Wheaton. This campaign encourages residents to patronize local and independent establish-

ments. Councilmember Ervin is a proponent of this approach. "We have learned a lot of lessons in our redevelopment of Montgomery County, and one of the things we would really like to do in Wheaton is celebrate and promote small homegrown businesses," she said.

For more information about the Wheaton Small Business Alliance or the "Think Local First" campaign contact Eric Aldrette at LEDC's Wheaton office at 240-777-4957 or visit [www.dcalba.org](http://www.dcalba.org).

## PURPLE LINE UPDATE

As the Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA) analysis of the Purple Line continues, Councilmember Ervin is committed to ensuring that all possible options and mitigation measures are analyzed, so that the Purple Line has a positive impact on the communities that the light rail or bus line may ultimately serve. The goal is for the Purple Line to be constructed in a manner that improves the environment, decreases commuting times, reduces vehicle traffic, enhances property values and provides reliable east-west/west-east mass transporta-

tion. In December 2007, the MTA released preliminary data showing significant ridership and improved travel times along the proposed Purple Line routes.

Councilmember Ervin and her staff have met several times with the MTA's Purple Line project team to obtain information on potential alignments and discuss community impacts. She continues an open dialogue with the MTA to ensure that all options are explored by the MTA before any final decisions are made by state representatives. If you have suggestions, concerns or thoughts regarding the Purple Line, please contact Councilmember Ervin's office, so this information can be provided to the MTA. For more information, go to [www.purplelinemd.com](http://www.purplelinemd.com).

Alternative	New Carrollton to Bethesda during Peak Travel Time	Ridership	Capital Costs	Ongoing Operation and Maintenance
Small Scale Improvements to Mass Transit not including the Purple Line	108 minutes*	Not Available	\$105M	\$8M
Medium Investment: Bus Rapid Transit	64 minutes	38,000 – 41,000	\$650 – 750M	\$9M
Medium Investment: Light Rail Transit	52 minutes	42,000 – 45,000	\$1.17 – 1.35B	\$18M

\* Bus

Source: MTA, Dec. 2007, Preliminary estimates subject to change.



MTA logo



## Councilmember Ervin Joined Class Acts Arts to Unveil “Panels of Hope” Mural



Councilmember Ervin was proud to join Class Acts Arts, the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation and Northwood High School Principal Henry Johnson

to unveil the “Panels of Hope” mural, which was created by youthful offenders at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility. The mural was enthusiastically received by Northwood High School and can be viewed in the school’s main office.

For additional information about the mural contact Class Acts Arts, Inc. in Silver Spring at 301-588-7525 or check out [www.classactsarts.org](http://www.classactsarts.org).

## Pyramid Atlantic Changes

Pyramid Atlantic, a visual arts center and gallery that focuses on the creation and exhibition of paper, prints and book arts, underwent exciting changes in 2007.

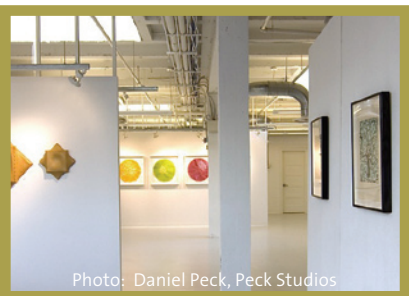


Photo: Daniel Peck, Peck Studios

In November, Pyramid Atlantic completed significant renovations that provided more exhibition space and improved access to the gallery.

In addition to the physical changes, Pyramid Atlantic also has a new

leader. After 27 years, Helen Frederick stepped down as the organization’s executive director. Her successor, Jose Dominguez, has more than 15 years of experience in non-profit management and youth program development.

Stop in to see all the changes Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or by appointment on weekends. For more information, visit [www.pyramidatlanticartcenter.org](http://www.pyramidatlanticartcenter.org).

## Old Blair Auditorium

Councilmember Ervin has continued her efforts to jumpstart the renovation of Old Blair Auditorium. In September 2007, she attended the Old Blair Auditorium Inc. event, “Rock for Renovation.” In addition, her ongoing efforts to obtain facility planning funding from MCPS have been successful. In fiscal year 2009, the MCPS Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budget recommends that funds be allocated to begin facility planning for the auditorium’s renovation. Councilmember Ervin continues to seek additional financial support from county government and looks forward to a continued collaboration with MCPS on this project.

Additional information about the Old Blair Auditorium can be found at [www.oldblairauditorium.org](http://www.oldblairauditorium.org).

## Councilmember Ervin Visited the Gandhi Brigade

The Gandhi Brigade, based in Silver Spring, is a youth project that uses the media arts as a tool for connecting youth to their community and to critical issues in their world.

Adults who have experience working with youth or media teach teens how to use video and graphic arts to explore a variety of social issues. The organization’s “Finding Our Turf” video about the social dynamics centered around the turf in downtown Silver Spring won recognition at the Takoma Park Film Festival.

To learn more about the Gandhi Brigade, visit [www.gandhibrigade.org](http://www.gandhibrigade.org).



*Councilmember Ervin meets with member of the Gandhi Brigade and takes time to give an interview to one of the students.*



# ERVIN'S ACTIVITIES



Photo: Ed Murtagn, Friends of Sligo Creek

*Councilmember Ervin stresses the importance of getting diverse constituent groups involved in protecting the county's watersheds.*



*Councilmember Ervin bags groceries to help fight breast cancer.*



Photo: HOC

*Councilmembers Ervin and Andrews present Nancy Scull, HOC's FSS coordinator, with a proclamation recognizing the program's accomplishments.*

## STORMWATER PARTNERS NETWORK CONFERENCE

On October 27, Councilmember Ervin was a guest speaker at the Clean Water and Streams for Montgomery Conference sponsored by Montgomery County Stormwater Partners. More than half of the county's watersheds are in fair to poor condition, and public participation is critical to their restoration and protection. Some of the issues discussed at the conference were methods for monitoring stream quality and runoff reduction, promoting and protecting environmental rights and the 2007 Maryland Stormwater Management Act.

As a way to help protect the county's watersheds, Councilmember Ervin cosponsored the Upper Paint Branch Special Protection Area Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA). This ZTA reduced the allowable impervious surface on new development from 10 to eight percent. This change will help protect and improve water quality in the Upper Paint Branch watershed. Councilmember Ervin also worked tirelessly with her colleagues on the Transportation and Environment Committee to ensure that environmentally sensitive design elements were included as part of the county's new road code.

To learn more about this conference or how you can get involved, visit [www.stormwaterpartners.org](http://www.stormwaterpartners.org).

## COMMUNITY BRIDGES — 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

Community Bridges celebrated a significant milestone—10 years of service for low-income, immigrant girls and young women.

During the organization's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, Councilmember Ervin was recognized for her work and advocacy on behalf of the girls that Community Bridges serves and received the Phenomenal Woman Award.

## SAFEWAY BREAST CANCER EVENT

Councilmember Ervin bagged groceries at Safeway on Thayer Avenue to show her support for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Her efforts helped local Safeway stores raise nearly \$1 million to help fight breast cancer. "It was just like riding a bicycle. Once I got into the rhythm, there was no stopping me," said Councilmember Ervin, who used to work as a check-out clerk for Safeway many years ago.

## FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY GRADUATION

Councilmember Ervin spoke at the 2007 Family Self-Sufficiency Program graduation. This federally mandated program is provided by the Housing Opportunities Commission and is designed to help families, who live in public housing, end their dependency on welfare assistance over a five- to seven-year period.

## A WELCOME ADDITION TO TEAM ERVIN

Councilmember Ervin is delighted to introduce her newest team member, Carol Edwards, who serves as her legislative senior aide. Prior to joining Councilmember Ervin's staff, Carol worked for 18 years in the Council's planning and zoning division. Carol has vast experience handling issues for residents because of her work on land use issues and from serving as staff for various Council appointed boards and committees. Carol schedules Councilmember Ervin's meetings and events and provides constituent service. Carol is a 37-year resident of the county and a Montgomery College graduate.